National Nuclear Security Administration
U.S. Department of Energy www.nnsa.doe.gov

NEWS

For Immediate Release
July 19, 2006

Contact: NNSA Public Affairs
(202) 586-7371

U.S.-Origin Nuclear Fuel Safely Returned from Argentina

NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative Completes First Step To Remove U.S.-Origin HEU from Argentina

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Department of Energy's National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) has removed 24 fuel assemblies containing more than three kilograms of U.S.-origin highly enriched uranium (HEU) from Argentina. This slightly irradiated nuclear fuel was safely and securely returned to the United States through a joint effort with Argentina's National Atomic Energy Commission.

"We applaud the leadership role that Argentina is taking to minimize and, to the extent possible, eliminate the use of HEU in civil nuclear purposes," said NNSA Administrator Linton F. Brooks. "This shipment of highly enriched uranium is part of NNSA's broad global effort to reduce the risk terrorists acquiring nuclear material."

Under NNSA's Global Threat Reduction Initiative (GTRI), the United States and Argentina have been cooperating over the last year on a wide-range of nuclear nonproliferation activities. The removal and return of the 24 fuel assemblies from the RA-2 research reactor is the first step in a three-part agreement reached between the U.S. and Argentina to remove or dispose of all U.S.-origin HEU materials in Argentina.

The second step in the agreement includes converting the RA-6 research reactor in Argentina from the use of HEU to low enriched uranium fuel, a material that is less attractive for proliferation. Lastly, U.S.-origin spent HEU fuel from the RA-6 research reactor will be returned to the United States.

NNSA works closely with the international community to remove or dispose of excess and vulnerable stockpiles of nuclear material in order to reduce the risk of terrorists acquiring it for use as a weapon of mass destruction. The mission of GTRI is to identify, secure, recover and/or facilitate the final disposition of high-risk vulnerable nuclear and radiological materials around the world as quickly as possible.

Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, reliability and performance of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile without nuclear testing; works to reduce global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.

###